DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 960 CS 504 894

AUTHOR Cooper, Pamela J.
TITLE Oral Communication across the Curriculum: Teaching Oral Communication in the English Classroom.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Speech Association (Indianapolis, IN, April 4-6, 1985).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Environment; Communication Skills; *Curriculum Design; *English Curriculum; *Integrated Curriculum; *Learning Activities; *Models; Program Implementation; Secondary Education; *Speech Communication; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

One curriculum design model for integrating oral communication in the English classroom consists of three components: communication contexts, communication functions, and communication skills. The model provides a perspective through which appropriate communication curricula and activities can be developed for students of all ability levels, involving students in learning basic oral communication skills and providing them with a repertoire of exeriences in a variety of contexts. The model can be viewed as a cube in which each of the portions or "cells" of the cube represents a number of possible communication activities that can be developed. Role playing, children's literature, symposiums, interviews, debates, films, storytelling, creative dramatics, and reading aloud can all be used to integrate oral communication skills into the English curriculum. Of course, the most important element in implementing the program is the need to develop a communication environment in the classroom. Among the teacher competencies that can help to create such a supportive environment are (1) positive self-concept, (2) self-disclosure, (3) descriptiveness, (4) owning feelings, (5) empathy, (6) listening, (7) response styles, and (8) behavioral flexibility. (A figure of the model is appended.) (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED255960

Oral Communication Across the Curriculum:

Teaching Oral Communication in

the English Classroom

Pamela J. Cooper

Northwestern University

Central States Speech Association Convention

April 4 - 6, 1985

Indianapolis, Indiana

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Pamela Cooper

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 504 884

Oral Communication Across the Curriculum:

Teaching Oral Communication in

the English Classroom

INTRODUCTION

As we are all now aware, oral communication is the fourth basic skill. In 1979 the Basic Skills Proficiency Act (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title II) added to the three R's of reading, writing, and 'rithmetic, a fourth basic skill - oral communication. Since that time, many national groups have emphasized the importance of systematic instruction in oral communication. For example, Dr. Ernest Boyer in High School (1983) calls for a semester oral communication course. The College Board (1983) defines oral communication as one of the six basic competencies all college-bound seniors need. Th National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) in their report suggest that we are a nation at risk and underscore the need for effective oral communication - both speaking and listening. Adler (1982) places oral communication as a part of the fundamental education for all students. The Council for Basic Education (1983) also emphasizes the importance of oral communication. State reports from Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Oregon, Texas, and Washington, as well as professional organizations such as the Speech Communication Assoiation (SCA), the National Council of Teachers of English, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National PTA, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals have called for the inclusion of oral communication instruction in our schools.

Often these reports suggest that oral communication should be integrated across the high school curriculum. In a recently published document, Essentials of Education (1979) a number of administrative and educational organizations

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

emphasized the need for integration and coordination of the basic skills with the content areas:

> The interdependence of skills and content is the central concept of the essentials of education. Skills and abilities do not grow in isolation from content. In all subjects, students develop skills in using language and other symbol systems; they develop the ability to reason; they undergo experiences that lead to emotional and social maturity. Students master these skills and abilities through observing, listening, reading, talking, and writing <u>about</u> science, mathematics, history and the social sciences, the arts and other aspects of our intellectual, social and cultural heritage. As they learn about their world and its heritage they necessarily deepen their skills in language and reasoning and acquire the basis for emotional, aesthetic and social growth.

Generally, when teachers are presented with the facts that oral communication is the primary mode of learning (and thus, enhancing oral communication skills can enhance learning) and is a life skill, they are convinced that oral communication training can accomplish two important goals: (1) aid student learning in other basic skills areas, and (2) prepare students for life long learning.

Convincing teachers of the importance of oral communication is not difficult; convincing them they can teach it is a different matter. Teachers often feel they have more to teach in a day than time permits. However, when teachers are exposed to ways of integrating oral communication skills into already existing curriculum and understand the values of doing so - both to their students and themselves - they are willing to try.

NECESSARY SKILLS

Cooper and Gray (1984) present a curriculum design model for oral

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

communication consisting of three components: Communication Contexts, Communication Functions, and Communication Skills. Figure 1 presents the curriculum "cube."

The model provides a perspective through which communication curricula and activities can be developed which are appropriate for:

1. Students of all ability levels,
2. Involving students in learning basic oral communication skills, and
3. Providing students with a repertoire of experiences in a variety of contexts, for varying purposes.

Each of the portions or "cells" of the cube represent a number of possible communication activities or a unit which can be developed. The cells extended from the model in Figures 2 and 3 illustrate how the teacher might develop activities. The cell in Figure 2 represents a communication activity in which the learner is working with others in an interpersonal context with the major communication function being to inform. The skills being emphasized focus on listening/responding. The cell in Figure 3 represents a communication activity in which the learner is working with others in a small group context with the major communication function being feeling. The skills being emphasized focus on evaluating communication. Note that all communication skill components are involved in every communication context and for every communication function. However, in order to assist students to develop competencies, we need to focus specifically on each skill. From the cell we can now develop an appropriate instructional activity. For example:

GRADE: 12

CONTEXT: Interpersonal

SKILL: Listening/Responding

FUNCTION: Informing

OBJECTIVE: Students will understand the importance of

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

listening/responding skills in an employment interview.

MATERIALS: Help wanted ads; application forms

TASK: Each student brings to class a "help wanted" ad which is relevant to her/him. Each student writes a letter inquiring about the job and a resume for this imaginary employer. The student then fills out a job application for the job (Teachers need a wide selection of application forms).

PROCEDURE: In pairs, students role play applying for the job. One is the employer; one, the employee. They then switch roles. Evaluation forms are provided in Appendix 1 of this paper.

GRADE: 9

CONTEXT: Small Group

SKILL: Evaluating

FUNCTION: Feeling

OBJECTIVE: Students will recognize and evaluate the feeling of characters in a poem.

MATERIALS: Selections from Spoon River Anthology

PROCEDURE: Divide students into small groups. After reading a selection from Spoon River Anthology, students discuss what they believe the person is trying to say about her/himself, and the reason for saying it.

EVALUATION: Ask students to choose another selection from Spoon River Anthology and write a paper analyzing: 1) What does the person feel? and 2) If you were able to talk with her/him, what would you say?

Using the model to generate activities, teachers can be sure that they are

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

teaching all functions and competencies in all contexts rather than focusing on a few. Note also that oral communication skill development can be incorporated into the English classroom. Role playing, children's literature, symposiums, interviews, debates, films, storytelling, creative dramatics, reading aloud can all be used to integrate oral communication skills into the English curriculum. (For information on each of the listed techniques see Blankenship and Stelzer, 1979; Brown, 1977; Clinkscale, 1979; Cowe, 1976; G. Fox, 1976-77; S. Fox, 1976; Kolcyznski & Capelka, 1977; F. May, 1980; J. May, 1979; Quisenberry & Wills, 1975; Wagner, 1979).

IMPLEMENTATION

Perhaps the most important element in implementing the program is the need to develop a communication environment in the classroom. Most students have been accustomed to sitting quietly while the teacher talks to them. They will not automatically begin talking just because the teacher has decided to integrate oral communication instuction into the courrculum. Nor are they likely to become more active listeners. Students must be encouraged to communicate and to have their attention focused on the process.

Teachers can do several things to encourage the development of a good classroom communication environment. They can focus on students' ideas by asking for clarification, elaboration, justification. They can develop questioning strategies which challenge students to analyze, evaluate,and synthesize rather than simply "parroting back" knowledge gained through reading. Students can be encouraged to question classmates, and teachers can learn to wait after asking a question so that students have time to consider their responses. (For specific ways to aid teachers in accomplishing such goals, see Cooper, 1984).

Perhaps the most important means to enourage a communication environment is a

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

supportive climate. Cooper and Galvin (1982) suggest several teacher competencies which will help to create a supportive communication classroom climate:

1. Positive self-concept. Effective teachers generally have a positive self-image. This leads to a flexibility which allows teachers to foster pupil autonomy and accept pupil ideas.
2. Self-disclosure. Sharing information about ourselves that others are unlikely to know can help build a climate of trust and enhance student/teacher relationships in the classroom. The more we communicate about ourselves, the freer students will feel to communicate about themselves.
3. Descriptiveness. Feedback which is based on observable behavior is more effective in building a supportive communication climate than is feedback based on personality. Being descriptive suggests that we communicate as concretely and specifically as we can based on observations rather than on inferences.
4. Owning feelings. Each of us communicates from our own perceptions which may or may not match the perceptions of another. Communicating thoughts and feelings as belonging to us avoids the problem of implying that we are always right. Owning our feeling can do much to promote supportiveness because we do not always blame others for our feelings.
5. Empathy. Empathy means the ability to "walk a mile" in our students' shoes. We perceive ideas, situations, and feelings as they are perceived by our students. We don't necessarily agree with such feelings or ideas, but we do try to understand them from the student's perspective. This ability encourages students to feel comfortable communicating with us.
6. Listening. We can learn much about our students if we listen to them. We acquire knowledge, develop language, increase our own communication

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

abilities, and increase our understanding of ourselves and others through listening. Listening, then, is an important skill to develop and improve as a teacher as well as a student.

7. Response styles. Research (see Johnson, 1972) indicates that most of us respond to others in evaluative or interpretative ways. We tend to judge others or tell them what they mean or feel. Such response styles are likely to decrease students' desires to communicate. Other response styles, such as being supportive, understanding, probing, will increase the desire to communicate.

8. Behvioral flexibility. Behavioral flexibility permits teachers to use such communication skills as self-disclosure, empathy, response styles, etc., appropriately. Learning such skills and using them in isolation may seem simple. Selecting the most appropriate strategy based on a student's needs at a particular moment requires a greater commitment to improve the communication environment in the classroom by the teacher.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

Adler, Mortimer. (1982). The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto. New York: Macmillan.

Blankenship, J. & Stelzner, S.L. (1979). Speech Communication Activities in the Writing Classroom. Annandale, VA: ERIC/RCS, Speech Communication Association.

Boyer, Ernest. (1983). High School: A Report on Secondary Education In America. New York; Harper and Row.

Brown, Jenifer. (1977). Reading Aloud Re-evaluated. Language Arts, 54, 191-192.

Buckley, M. H. (1976). A Guide For Developing an Oral Language Curriculum. Language Arts, 53, 621-627.

Bushman, J. H. (1976). Discussion Skills: Let Them Work For You. Language Arts, 53, 621-627.

Clinkscale, B. (1979) Thirteen Strategies To Improve Oral Communication Skills. ACA Bulletin, 42, 11-14.

The College Board. (1983). Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able To Do. New York: The College Board.

Cooper, P. (1984). Speech Communication For the Classroom Teacher, 2nd ed. Dubuque, IA: Gorsuch-Scarisbrick.

Cooper, P. & Galvin, K. (1982). Improving Classroom Communication. The Talking and Writing Series, K-12. Washington, DC: Dingle Associates.

Cooper, P. and Gray, P. (1984). Integrating Oral Communication Skills Across the Curriculum, K-6. Journal of the Illinois Speech and Theatre Association, 36, 26-37.

Cowe, D. G. (1976). Interviewing By Young Children. Language Arts, 53, 632-633.

Edelsky, C. (1979). Teaching Oral Language. Language Arts, 55, 291-296.

Essentials of Education (1979) is a document avaiable from the Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Road, Annandale, VA, 20003 (single copies free).

Fox, G. (1976-77). Twenty-Four Things to Do With a Book. Children's Literature in Education, 135-138.

Fox, S. E. (1976). Freeing Language In the Classroom. Language Arts, 53, 612-616.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1973). Explorations in the Function of Language. London: Edward Arnold.

Kolczynski, R. G) & Cepelka, J. (1977). Creative Dramatics: Process or Product?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Language Arts, 54, 283-286.

May, F. B. (1980). To Help Children Communicate. Columbus, OH: Chales Merrill.

May J. (1979). Encouraging Children's Creative Oral Responses Through Nonnarrative Films. Language Arts, 56, 244-250.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. "A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Excellence in Education.

Sheldon, H. (1977). Wanted: More Effective Teaching of Oral Communication. Language Arts, 54, 665-667.

Wagner, B. J. (1979). Using Drama to Create An Environment for Language Development. Language Arts, 56, 268-274.

Wood, K. E. (1976). Encouraging Oral Expression: Some Thoughts For Teachers. Language Arts, 53, 617-620.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 1

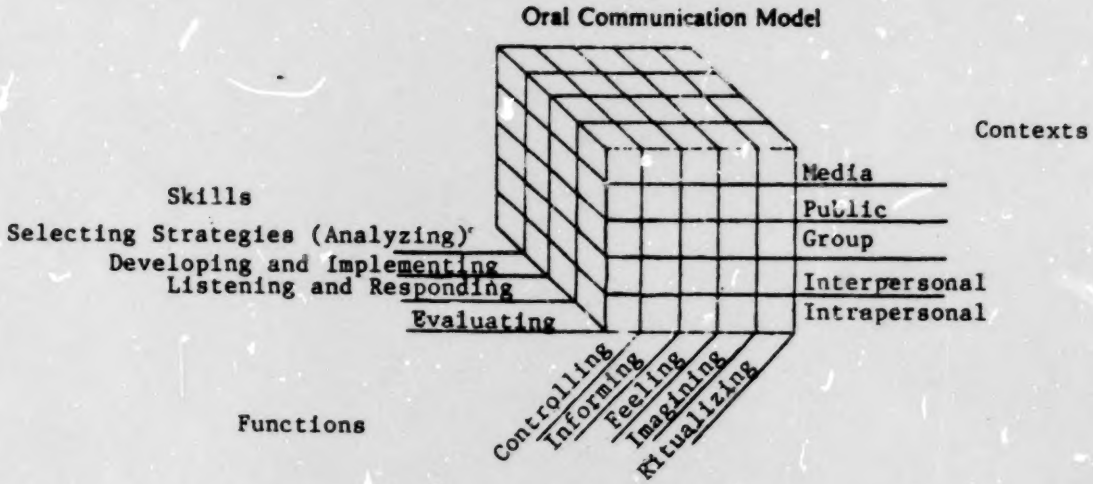


Figure 2

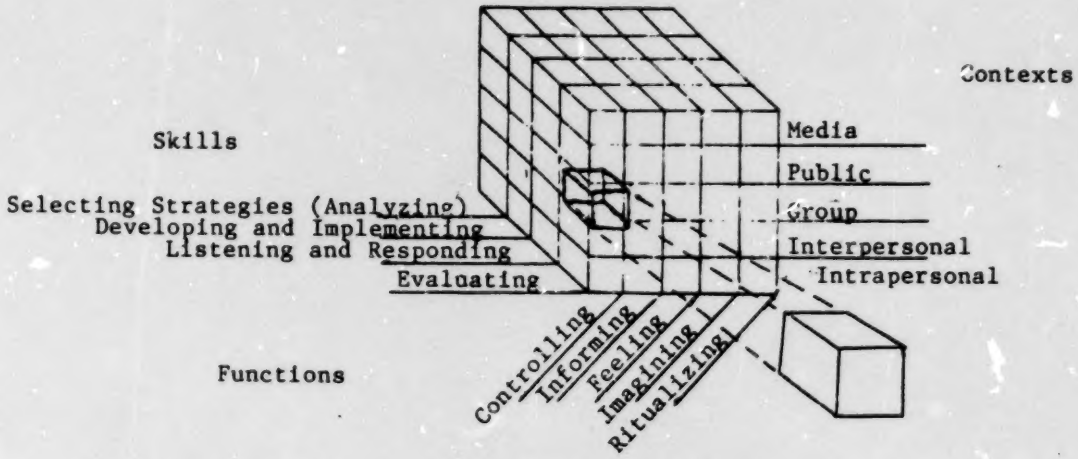
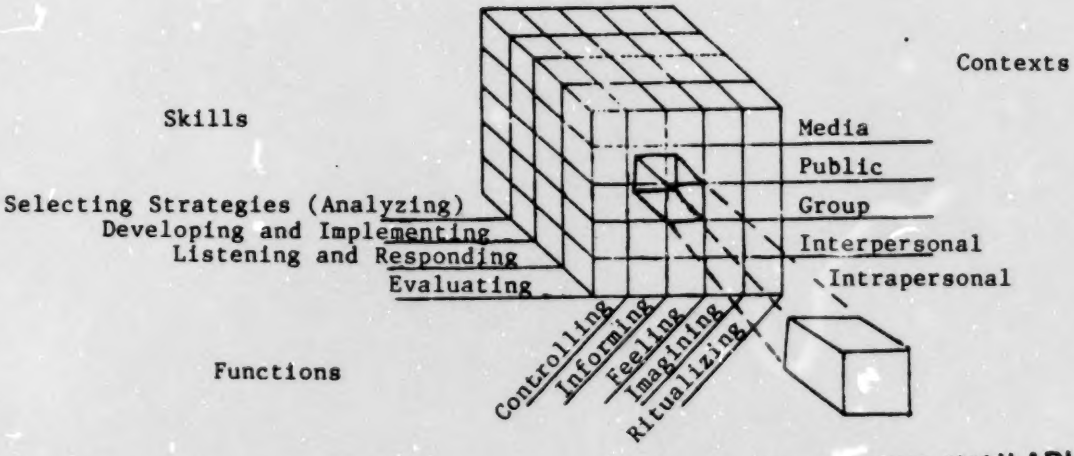


Figure 3



BEST COPY AVAILABLE